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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 5312  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3831  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 6126  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2939  
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 8401  
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 1185  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 1816  
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD  
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iran

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media cited Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's announcement yesterday that his country has made great strides in uranium fuel production and uranium enrichment. HaQaretz and Israel Radio

reported that Israel does not object to talks between the West and Iran intended to stop Iran's nuclearization, as long as Iran does not take advantage of these talks. Maariv, which bannered President Obama's call for a dialogue with Iran, quoted an Israeli defense source as saying that Israel expects a time-limit to talks with Iran.

All media reported that Egypt is holding 49 nationals of various Arab countries on suspicion of being members of a Hizbullah-controlled terrorist network. Israel Radio cited a denial that Israeli Arabs were implicated in the network, as had been published previously. The accused have allegedly planned to carry out attacks inside Egypt, including tourist sites frequented by Israelis

The Jerusalem Post reported that Quartet envoy Tony Blair intervened directly with DM Ehud Barak to enable Northern Ireland politician Gerry Adams through the Erez Crossing and into the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, where he met Hamas PM Ismail Haniyeh. Citing news agencies, HaQaretz quoted Adams as saying that Gaza is an open-air prison.

Leading media reported that yesterday President Obama and his wife Michelle hosted a private Passover Seder in the White House, fulfilling a campaign-trail promise he made a year ago. This is the first time a U.S. president ever held such a ceremony. The Jerusalem Post reported that the President described Jews' ascent from slavery to freedom as among the most powerful stories of suffering and redemption in human history. Israel Radio saw it as a kind of counterweight to Obama's call to the Muslim world in remarks he made in Turkey.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman was nominated by President Obama to replace David Welch as the top U.S. diplomat on the Middle East.

Maariv reported that over the weekend British Foreign Secretary David Miliband conveyed to Israel the message that Jerusalem must become the capital of Israel and Palestine.

Media reported that on Wednesday settlers from Bat Ayin entered the Palestinian village of Tsafa, where clashes erupted. Sixteen to 38 Palestinians and a settler were wounded.

HaQaretz (English Ed.) reported that this week pro-Palestinian activists launched a fundraising drive to cover hospital costs for Tristan Anderson, an uninsured American protester critically wounded last month by police in the West Bank. Meanwhile his family is preparing to sue Israel.

Leading media reported that 30 northern Israel residents are suing North Korea and Hizbullah for \$100 million in a Washington court for damage sustained from Katyusha rockets.

Media reported that on Wednesday PM Benjamin Netanyahu told Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi that Israel would aid earthquake-stricken Italy. The remains of an Israeli-Arab killed in the earthquake were returned to Israel over the holiday.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Military correspondent Amos Harel and Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz: QTo fight Iranian subversion in Egypt, Cairo is willing to help Israel prevent the arming of Hamas in the Gaza Strip.... The report of Hizbullah actions in Sinai legitimizes harsher steps by the Egyptian regime.

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote in the mass-circulation pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QThe President of the U.S. will not pressure the Prime Minister beyond the boundaries of his coalition's flexibility. That was true of Clinton and true of Bush, and judging by Obama's question, holds true now.

Shaul Arieli, a former chief Israeli negotiator with the Palestinians and an architect of the Geneva Initiative, wrote in HaQaretz: QAnnapolis and Oslo once again made clear the gap that moderates and pragmatists on both sides can bridge. These processes underscored that what is truly needed is the ability to carry out an agreement.

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QEgypt is displeased -- and justly so -- over several infuriating statements issued by the foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman. It is about time that the Foreign Ministry summoned the Egyptian ambassador to Israel to voice its protest for the insolent anti-Semitism being expressed by this senior Egyptian official.

Block Quotes:

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#### I. QInside Netanyahu's Head

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote in the mass-circulation pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/10): QThe most important conversation that [Netanyahu] had since entering [his] new position was with Barack Obama. The conversation was good, friendly, with a potential for good chemistry. The most important sentence that was uttered was a question that Obama asked: What are your political limitations? In other words, how much flexibility will your right-wing coalition allow you? The President of the U.S. will not pressure the Prime Minister beyond the boundaries of his coalition's flexibility. That was true of Clinton and true of Bush, and judging by Obama's question, holds true now. Lieberman, in his heated speeches, caused a great deal of damage to the image of the government and the state. There is no doubt that Netanyahu is angry with him. However, Netanyahu cannot ignore the advantages: Lieberman lowers the world's expectations for Israeli concessions. The main thing is that he clarified that the only address for diplomacy is the Prime Minister's Bureau... If I were Netanyahu, I would say that negotiations with the Palestinians must take place, but will not result in a state. The Israelis are not the only ones who have given up on the Palestinians. So have the Americans. The speeches about two states for two peoples are only speeches. That also goes for Syria. American cannot get much from Syria except for a feeling of accomplishment. Israel cannot get much either. We need to concentrate on the Arab world. That is the main significance of negotiations with the Palestinians: softening opposition to Israel within the Arab world. We have a common interest with the Arab regimes: to convince the U.S. that there is no alternative to taking action against Iran. Iran is the main thing. One could almost say that it is the most important thing. Netanyahu's main partner, his support in the government and facing the world, is Ehud Barak. Over the past several weeks, Netanyahu heard everyone in the know telling him: Barak will subvert you. He disagreed with them. Barak with thirteen Knesset members-actually, with seven-is not the same Barak. He knows his limits.

#### II. "ItQs About Iran"

Military correspondent Amos Harel and Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (4/10): QThe official report from Cairo Thursday -- that a Hizbullah terror ring was uncovered in Cairo and was planning hostile operations in Egypt -- should be seen within the context of a greater conflict that does not necessarily involve Israel. To fight Iranian subversion in Egypt, Cairo is willing to help Israel prevent the arming of Hamas in the Gaza Strip.... Ironically, Cairo is making its accusations against Iran just as the Obama administration is inviting dialogue. But Egypt cannot hold still. Cairo arrests dozens of Muslim Brotherhood members every month on terror suspicions. Since Hamas's final takeover of the Strip, Brotherhood and Hamas delegations visit each other every few weeks.... The report of Hizbullah actions in Sinai legitimizes harsher steps by the Egyptian regime. If it were only a matter of

weapons smuggling into Israel, the Egyptian public response would not be as supportive. It would come as no surprise if it turned out that Israeli intelligence also helped uncover this terror network.

### III. "Bridging the Gap"

Shaul Arieli, a former chief Israeli negotiator with the Palestinians and an architect of the Geneva Initiative, wrote in HaQaretz (4/10): Q Is it true Israeli leaders went very far out of their way to meet the Palestinians, who got cold feet at the moment of truth? Or did Barak and Olmert set out to pressure the Palestinians after they had shown a willingness to compromise on a two-state solution instead of their dream of a Qsingle Palestine and the alleged right of return? Even though the Palestinians' basic positions are supported by resolutions and international law, they proved their willingness to show flexibility in many areas. They did this to align their positions with Israeli governments' ability to carry out an agreement in light of the settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.... All the same, the Palestinians have always viewed an agreement as a package deal: If they concede on one issue, they should be compensated on another. Olmert, like Barak, tried to shatter the formula of total territorial concessions for peace that determined Israel's deals with Egypt and Jordan.... Annapolis and Oslo once again made clear the gap that moderates and pragmatists on both sides can bridge. These processes underscored that what is truly needed is the ability to carry out an agreement.

### IV. QBlood and Matzo, Nothing Has Changed

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (4/10): QThere is always someone out there to explain how Jews are drinking the blood of gentiles. And if we thought this was something of the past -- then we were wrong. The march of incitement continues. It is world embracing. And it is frightening. The forces of darkness align with the radicals of QenlightenmentQ and together they spread their blood libels. Here are some such stops along the way. According to Palestinian Media Watch, 4 this week Hamas television -- the organization against which we fought a war and which has since been blooming -- aired a documentary about Jews. In the new film the Jew explains that he does Qnot dip his hands in water but rather in the blood of young MuslimsQ.... Zahi Hawass published an article this week which states that the concept of murdering women, children and elderly flows in the blood of the Jews of Palestine. He writes that it was they who created a religion aimed against humanity in its entirety. Is this another Taliban or Hizbullah operative? Not quite. The writer, a professor of archaeology, is head of the Egyptian antiquities authority, a completely public institution. His statements were published in an important newspaper, Ash-Sharq al-Awsat, which sees print in London and is circulated across the Arab world. A bit before this, in an interview to Egyptian television, the learned archaeologist explained that the QJews control the world.Q Egypt is displeased -- and justly so -- over several infuriating statements issued by the foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman. It is about time that the Foreign Ministry summoned the Egyptian ambassador to Israel to voice its protest for the insolent anti-Semitism being expressed by this senior Egyptian official.

### 12. Iran:

#### Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QBenjamin Netanyahu needs to convince Obama that doing anything short of stopping the mullahs would be dangerously reckless.

Intelligence affairs writer Ronen Bergman opined in the mass-circulation pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QThe Iranians are accelerating [their nuclear program]. Israel lacks accurate information.

#### Block Quotes:

## II. "Obama Abroad"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/10):QOn the issues that most concern Israelis, paramount among them Tehran's nuclear ambitions, Obama reiterated that he had Qmade it clear to the people and leadersQ of Iran Qthat the United States seeks engagement based upon mutual interests and mutual respect. Now, Iran's leaders must choose whether they will try to build a weapon or build a better future for their peopleQ.... Obama has been convinced -- partly by venerable cold warriors such as Sam Nunn and Henry Kissinger -- that it might be easier to garner international support for stopping pariah states from going nuclear if the U.S. shows a willingness to sharply reduce its own atomic arsenal.... What this means for Israel in pursuit of its highest national interest, blocking Iran from fielding a nuclear bomb, is that Benjamin Netanyahu needs to convince Obama that doing anything short of stopping the mullahs would be dangerously reckless.

## II. "The Iranians Are Stepping Up Their Efforts"

Intelligence affairs writer Ronen Bergman opined in the mass-circulation pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/10):QIn the final analysis, the Iranians are accelerating [their nuclear program]. Israel lacks accurate information. Most involved people in the country believe that Israel does not have a military option since it would have to go to war without the United States and that it should not act on its own even if Obama authorizes it. A majority of Israeli experts says that an attack today, would delay the [Iranian] project by two to three years. The repercussions on the history of the Middle East would be unbearable for Israel.

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